DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 152 SP 035 670

AUTHOR Poore, Michael T.
TITLE One Evaluator's Dozen Look-Fors.
PUB DATE [93]
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Lesson Plans; Teacher Education; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Evaluation; *Teaching Styles

ABSTRACT

An experienced teacher evaluator and university supervisor for student teachers has developed a list of 12 things to look for in evaluating a teacher. With the attitude that evaluation is to improve teaching, not to judge teachers, the evaluator has completed 140 Career Ladder evaluations and 44 student teaching evaluations. The twelve points he looks for are: (1) a beginning, middle and end to lessons or a day that gives shape and coherence to the work; (2) opportunities to teach, practice, and share what was learned, and evaluate what the student has learned; (3) incorporation of auditory, tactile, visual, and kinesthetic learning; (4) adjustment of plans to fit students and not to satisfy the evaluation or the evaluator; (5) use of learner remarks; (6) variety of methods of practice; (7) discipline or the lack of the need for it when a teacher has well-established control; (8) how a teacher responds to an incorrect answer; (9) efforts to relate the lesson to previous and future lessons; (10) the match of presentation to practice; (11) charisma in the teacher's personality; and (12) the answers to a series of questions the evaluator asks himself about how the lesson might be improved, the teacher's grasp of the material, lesson and environment enhancing materials, and the use of manipulatives. (JB)

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One Evaluator's Dozen Look-Fors

Michael T. Poore

To be an effective evaluator, one must have a particular attitude. That attitude is one that believes that **evaluation is to improve teaching, not to judge teachers (not to remove).** As a Career Ladder evaluator and a university supervisor for student teachers, I try to exhibit this attitude. Because of this, I have strong feelings about the process and try to see the teachers and teaching objectively. I do, however, react subjectively when considering the students. They deserve a competent teacher who is good at what he/she does as well as a teacher who is willing to improve.

Not everyone involved in the evaluation process feels just that way. I have found that many administrators approach evaluating as a drudgery, not a privilege. Many of the folks who must do evaluations believe that the "paperwork" must be completed and on record in case "they"(the state department) come in to audit what is being done. Some of the public education teachers who cannot and do not teach are a result of this attitude. These teachers have "passed" evaluations because an administrator did not want the trouble of making recommendations to improve teaching; of course, the possibility exists that some of them may not know what good teaching is.

After completing 140 Career Ladder II and III evaluations and 44 student teaching evaluations, I believe that if certain things happen regularly in a classroom, then the potential for distinguished teaching exists. Things that have become important "look-fors" to me in the years that I have been an evaluator follow.

1. Beginning, Middle, End

Just as an essay contains an introduction, body, and conclusion, each lesson must have a beginning, middle, and end. For the Tennessee Instructional Model that means set, instruction, and closure. Whatever words are used, a teacher must tell the students what is to be learned, then teach that skill, concept, or knowledge; and finally the teacher must tie everything together. Bringing the lesson to a close by restating the learning or offering a conclusion to the day's lesson are the appropriate ways to end a class; never should we fall into that mold of letting the bell that ends the class be responsible for the end of the day's learning.

2. Teaching, Practice, Evaluation

An excellent lesson will provide the imparting of information, the opportunity to apply that information, and an opportunity to share that information. Whether the lesson is a skill, concept, or knowledge lesson, it is important to impart that knowledge and relate it to the students in whatever way, or ways, they learn best. Then students must be given an opportunity to apply what they have learned. If the lesson is a skill

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lesson, then an opportunity for practice must be given. If the lesson is a concept lesson, then a situation to apply the concept must be given to the students so that they can actualize the concept. If the lesson is one that tends to lecture, or impart knowledge, then a sharing of the information, possibly with peer partners, must be given to allow the students to verbalize that to which they have listened. After teaching and practicing, the memory of the student must be tested in order to improve retention of learning. Evaluation at this point may be in the form of sharing with the teacher orally, writing down what the students remember from the lesson, or an additional opportunity to practice, apply, or verbalize the learning. The teacher needs to remember that something must be done with the evaluation for it to be important to the student.(Example: explaining about nouns, allowing for practice, and having students circle nouns on comic strips)

3. Auditory, Tactile, Visual, Kinesthetic

The move from lecture and test and explain and test to involving the students in the learning process has made teachers aware of learning styles. Since we know that different students learn in different ways, we are obligated to teach using different methods. As much as possible a teacher must incorporate two or more learning styles. As an evaluator, I want to see three. Visual and auditory are easy to incorporate with our voices, tape recorders, videos, and textbooks. To be effective, outstanding, or distinguished, a teacher must include movement for the kinesthetic learner and manipulatives for the tactile learner. Something as simple as giving a tactile learner a copy of the picture being used on the overhead will work. Of course, the kinesthetic learner may need to move to a center or be actively involved in the learning. (Example: When studying the parts of speech, students can become a part of speech by giving them a word. To create, and move, the students may be asked to develop a sentence with those eight words they are holding. This enables the student to move as well as hold something. All four learning styles met with one easy practice activity!)

4. Adjustment of plan to fit students, not satisfy evaluation or evaluator

Often when an evaluation is taking place, a teacher will feel intimidated by the presence of the evaluator as well as the fact that the lesson has been discussed in a pre-conference. When a teacher is delivering a lesson, he/she might discover that students' needs do not necessarily fit with what was planned. Sometimes this is flagged by student questions about previous learning; sometimes this is flagged by a statement that causes the class to want to dig deeper into a subject. Whatever the cause, the students' needs must be put before the evaluation. If it is necessary to deviate from the original plan, so be it. Whenever those learner needs are questions that need

answering, they need to be dealt with. Otherwise, the learning that the teacher wants to occur will not. The students will be wondering about their own question, or others may have thoughts provoked by the question of their peer. When a lack of understanding exists, reteaching is more important than any plan previously devised or discussed.

5. Using Learner Remarks

In the course of a lesson, a student may give an explanation or a definition in a way that the teacher had not thought about. Using that definition or explanation will not only encourage and give confidence to the student who made the statement, but it will also make the other students aware of the teacher's pleasure with the student who made the remark. What results is an increased awareness of what is being taught. Too, an attitude develops that keeps the student interested in the lesson because he/she wants to be recognized as well. Taking advantage of those teachable moments is much more important to the learning process than any evaluation.

6. Vary Methods of Practice

Varying practice activities can be done through individual, partner, small group, or large group practices activities. Furthermore, the kind of practice can vary. One student may be asked to create a sentence using all parts of speech; another student might be asked to label the parts of speech in a particular sentence; while yet another student may be asked to take a newspaper article and find an example of each part of speech. Varying the method of the practice activity instead of the number of practice activities rates higher to an evaluator because it is more meaningful to the students.

7. Discipline, or the lack of the need for it!

If a teacher organizes his/her class in such a way that discipline problems do not occur, then evaluators realize that the lack of misbehavior indicates control. On the other hand, should a problem arise, the evaluator would expect the teacher to deal with the situation in an appropriate manner. A fallacy of evaluation is that evaluators need to see a teacher handling discipline problems. The lack of discipline problems indicates to me that organization and previous explanation about behavior have occurred. Personally, I would rather see structure than misbehavior.

8. A response to an incorrect answer

If an incorrect answer is given, there are questions that I ask myself. They include the following:

Does the teacher move on to someone else?

Does the teacher question the student to see if he knows the correct answer?

Does the teacher accept the incorrect information from the student?

Does the teacher know the correct answer?

Does the teacher let the student know why he's right or wrong?

Does the incorrect answer indicate that incorrect information may have been presented by the teacher?

A negative answer to any of these questions may indicate a lack of preparation and/or knowledge on the part of the teacher. On the other hand, an affirmative answer may indicate a sense of strategic questioning techniques and preparation on the part of the teacher.

9. Relationship of the Lesson

The relationship of a lesson to a previous one and a future one is important for the student to know immediately where the concept, skill, knowledge will be used. Furthermore, the teacher's verbalization of the relationship indicates planning on his/her part. Another relationship, even more important, is providing context. The teacher must be able to tell where, in the real world, the concept, skill, knowledge will be of use to the student. Too, the teacher must provide how the information will make a difference. Often the reason or need to learn makes the student more receptive to the lesson.

10. Match of Presentation to Practice

Simply put teachers must provide practice opportunities for what they have taught. If the math teacher discusses single digit addition, then this is what the practice should be. If the English teacher discusses the identification of prepositional phrases, then he/she should not plan to practice the use of prepositional phrases. If the keyboarding/typing instructor is teaching the home-row keys(a, s, d, f, j, k, l, ;), then he/she should not ask the student to type "z-o-o."

11. Charisma

I realize that charisma is a personality characteristic. Furthermore, while I understand that this behavior is desirable, I know that it is not entirely an objective call on the part of the evaluator. However, certain things happen in the charismatic teacher's classroom. Students listen intently, they enjoy coming to class, they talk with the teacher, they may ask questions without questioning, and they respect the teacher. One way to obtain this quality is for the teacher to be anticipatory of every student need(emotional, social, academic, and physical). Can these things be accomplished? Yes, and supervisors and evaluators call it "Teacher With-it-ness."

12. Questions I Ask Myself

When I leave the teacher's classroom to think about the lesson, to rate the lesson, and to write areas of strength and need, I ask myself the following questions:

1. Ultimately, if I could improve this lesson, how would that be?
2. Was the teacher dependent on the text for correct answers?
3. Did the teacher read the lesson from his/her notes or the text?
4. Did the teacher use what was about him/her to enhance the lesson? Items would include the bulletin board, posters, room decorations, resources, etc.
5. Were manipulatives used? If not, could hey have been? What? How?

Admittedly, the things listed in this essay are not inclusive of all the items all evaluator's look for or should look for. They are, however, important things. If these are happening on a regular basis, then quality teaching exists. If these are happening in most every lesson, then distinguished teaching exists.

In closing there is one question that I do not ask, and that is "Was this lesson adequate?" Since the goal of evaluation is to improve, I want to discuss strengths on which the teacher can build. Then I want to discuss areas of need for which the teacher can improve. Yet most importantly, I want to make specific recommendations on how the particular lesson that I observed would be better. If I can get a teacher to see that the goal is to improve, then maybe the next lesson he/she teaches will be examined by that teacher in a clear, more focused manner. When that examination begins to occur after teaching each lesson, then the result is an improved teacher and improved instruction: the ultimate goal of evaluation.